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SUBJECT: UN HUMAN RIGHTS CHIEF VISITS DRC, PROPOSES MAPPING  
PROJECT

¶1. (U) Summary. United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR) Louise Arbour visited the DRC May 13-18 to encourage the newly elected government to improve the human rights situation in the country. She met with President Joseph Kabila and other high-ranking officials and visited three provinces. Arbour also introduced a UNHCHR-sponsored DRC Mapping Exercise. End summary.

¶2. (U) UNHCHR Louise Arbour arrived in the DRC May 13 on a five-day visit, her first to the DRC. In Kinshasa, she met with President Joseph Kabila, Prime Minister Antoine Gizenga, National Assembly President Vitale Kamerhe, and the ministers of Human Rights, Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Justice. She also visited the Kinshasa Penitentiary and Re-education Center (the former Makala prison). In Bunia, Equateur; Goma, North Kivu; and Bukavu, South Kivu, May 16-18 she met with civilian and military justice authorities as well as with national and international NGOs.

¶3. (U) Arbour said in an interview given to Radio Okapi on May 15 that "grave human rights violations occur almost every day in the DRC," a situation she attributed to a climate of impunity throughout the country. She added that governmental authorities could not continue to use "lack of means as an excuse for the permanent paralysis and lack of action" on human rights.

¶4. (U) In a meeting with representatives of diplomatic missions May 15, Arbour announced a proposed DRC Mapping Exercise, which would serve as a human rights violation inventory covering the period 1993-2003. (Note: Human rights violations committed in the DRC prior to 2003 are outside the scope of the International Criminal Court, and occurred before the MONUC Human Rights Office began investigating complaints. End note.) The mapping project would take six to eight months to complete, and result in a report to be submitted to the UN Secretary General and possibly the Security Council.

¶5. (U) Although Arbour called the proposed exercise "a reference document to eliminate all revisionism," she emphasized that the intent of the exercise was also to serve as an impetus for future action. Possible actions could range from a Truth and Reconciliation Commission to prosecution of the worst violators by a joint international-DRC court. At a minimum, she said the exercise would "hold up a mirror" to the country that would lead to national dialogue on next steps.

¶6. (SBU) Arbour announced at the diplomatic meeting that Kabila, Gizenga, and Kamerhe had given their unqualified

support to the mapping exercise. Some diplomats raised questions about whether the report would be made public and if the DRC's "fragile democracy" could handle such a report. Arbour affirmed that the report would be public and at least would serve as a "definitive point of reference" on human rights violations in the DRC. She added that waiting for grand institutional reform in the DRC before creating a "real historic record" would mean years would pass before anything happened. She also told the group that the intent of the exercise was to determine those "most responsible" for human rights violations.

17. (SBU) Comment: Funding for the mapping exercise has apparently not yet been secured. In a subsequent meeting, MONUC Human Rights Officer Ferdinand Borello and UNHCHR Geneva Donor Coordinator Jean-Philippe Charlemagne said the UN is seeking \$2.5M from donor countries to finance the project. Substantial logistic support will be provided by MONUC's Human Rights Division offices throughout the country, but we are not yet aware of any donors having yet made commitments to fund the project. End comment.  
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